Washington Board Against Discrimination

Case # E-453 FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATOR November 17, 1958

Complainant - Mrs. Rindetta Jones

Respondent - Del Monte Cannery (Division of California Packing Corp.)
Yakima

Complaint - Filed October 29, 1958

Mrs. Rindetta Jones, a Negro woman residing at 1701 North Fourth Street, Yakima, charges the Del Monte Cannery with discrimination against her in employment because of her race and color.

The complainant states: She has been employed in Del Monte Cannery for at least two years. She has worked in several different positions, but mainly on a peach machine and as a pear trimmer in the preparation department. When she asked the supervisor of her department if she might work in the canning department and learn how to can fruit, she was told that she was needed just where she was. She asked the supervisor why there were no Negroes working in the canning department, and she was told that the colored girls should be kept together. She told the supervisor that it didn't seem fair that one could not be upgraded to a better paying job. The supervisor told her that everyone in the canning department did not feel the same as she did toward colored people, and that is why Negroes are not working in that department.

She stated that she was working on the night shift and the reason that she asked the supervisor was because she supervises the work and places each person on their job.

Reply

The respondent denies any discrimination in employment against the complainant.

The respondent stated that the agreement between the cannery and the union does not spell out just how persons are to be upgraded. He also stated that it is very difficult to move a person from one department to another, especially after the canning season has gotten under way. He also stated that the work in the canning department is very difficult and requires a special type of skill, although he was not able to spell out what that skill was.

The respondent did state that the work of the complainant has been satisfactory.

The respondent stated that between 75 and 100 Negroes are now employed by the Del Monte Cannery; and even if Negroes are not working in every department, a large number of them have been working for Del Monte for many years.

The respondent also stated that some non-whites have worked and are working in the canning department and in other departments in the cannery. He also stated that there was at least one non-white person who looked rather like she might be Spanish, but it was possible that she might be Negro.

Facts

In October of this year, the complainant did ask to be moved or otherwise upgraded to the canning department and was refused. The immediate supervisor of the complainant stated that her work was completely satisfactory.

The respondent organization has quite a large operation with between 600-700 persons employed. The two departments in question here are the preparation department and the canning department. There are two shifts worked during the canning season, a day shift, an afternoon-and-evening shift. In the preparation department, which is where the fruit is peeled and trimmed and then put on belts moving down to the canning department, the staff or crew was well integrated, with many non-white persons working harmoniously on the belts and peeling and trimming, with Caucasian persons. This was found to be true on both shifts.

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Among at least four supervisors for the respondent, none of them could remember Negroes having worked in the canning department. One person had worked there as supervisor for a good many years, and had worked in the plant for at least thirty years, and could not remember any Negro ever having worked in the canning department. It has been established by a number of persons, some now employed by the respondent and some who have been employed in the past, that no Negroes have been employed in the canning department. No Negroes have ever been employed as floor manager, supervisor, or in any of the offices.

The night crew is made up entirely of Negroes. This is the clean-up crew at the cannery, and the policy seems to be that of having all Negroes on this particular crew.

It has been established that during this canning season, persons have been moved from the preparation department into the canning department.

In at least three other canneries in Yakima, Negroes have been and are now in both the preparation and the canning departments.

Conclusions

The investigator finds reasonable cause to believe that an unfair practice has been committed against the complainant because of her race and color.

The investigator also finds reasonable cause to believe that it has been the policy of the respondent organization to keep Negroes from working in the canning department.

Rex Jones, Investigator

RJ:lp

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

In the matter of Mrs. Rindetta Jones (E-453) and Mrs. L. B. Chappell (E-457) v. Del Monte Cannery, the following terms have been agreed upon:

1. The Del Monte Cannery will comply fully with the Washington State Law Against Discrimination.

2. Race, creed, color, or national origin will not be considered in the employment, upgrading, supervision, assignment, or salary determination of any employee of the Del Monte Cannery.

3. All persons working in supervisory positions at the Del Monte Cannery will be informed as to the Washington State Law Against Discrimination and their responsibility in making the law effective and meaningful.

4. That when the next canning season begins, and if Mrs. L. B. Chappell and Mrs. Rindetta Jones are available for employment at the cannery, and if they desire to work in the canning department and are otherwise qualified, they shall be employed in that department under the same uniform terms and conditions as apply to all other employees.

RJ:lap